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*THE CHURCH AND ITS YOUNG ADULTS*



# THE CHURCH AND ITS YOUNG ADULTS

*J. Gordon Chamberlin*

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WITH A FOREWORD BY

*Ralph W. Sockman*

*Abingdon-Cokesbury Press*

NEW YORK

NASHVILLE

# THE CHURCH AND ITS YOUNG ADULTS

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SET UP, PRINTED, AND BOUND BY THE  
PARTHENON PRESS AT NASHVILLE, TEN-  
NESSEE, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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*To My Wife*

ELNA C. CHAMBERLIN





## *Foreword*

DURING THE PAST TWO DECADES WE HAVE BEEN deluged with books on youth. We have also been surfeited with writings purporting to tell us that life and almost everything else begins at forty. But, as a leading publisher said recently, the time is ripe for a book on the thirties—that period in which a person must discover his limitations without losing faith in his possibilities. It is in the thirties that we normally become established in our family groups, our work, our communities. It is a time freighted with immeasurable potentiality and yet with imminent peril.

From a spiritual standpoint the period between twenty-five and forty might almost be called “the dangerous age.” The engrossing application to the task of getting started in life, the focusing of interest on family responsibilities, the forming of social groups, and the suction of social activities—all combine to compete with the church for the time and attention of the young adult. Thus is produced in the typical parish that weakening of the link between the youth groups and the organizations of the older adults.

To the strengthening of this link of young adult-

hood the author of this volume has set himself. Having grown up in the Middle West and having been engaged since his seminary days in a metropolitan pastorate, Mr. Chamberlin writes with a wide horizon. He belongs to the age group of which he writes. He knows whereof he speaks. His diagnosis of the viewpoints and problems of his contemporaries is intimate and authentic.

The author is not content with dissecting the problems. He prescribes with specific concreteness. Possessing a remarkable gift for organization, he maps programs which lay leaders can follow. He gives both a philosophy of churchmanship and a strategy of Kingdom growth. Since the collective will is revitalized by individual creativity, everyone is called to be a leader. This book, therefore, is designed to be helpful for the individual layman as well as for the church official.

How desperately do we need a new missionary apologetic as the ranks of the old-time supporters are thinned by death! Here in this volume is to be found a most cogent and forward-looking appeal for the world-wide mission of the church. The author sets forth the challenges—"within the church, within the community, and beyond the horizon."

This is a book for the times—and for tomorrow.

RALPH W. SOCKMAN

## *Preface*

ADVANCE BY THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS ALWAYS A two-way drive. Within the church are all "sorts and conditions of men" who atrophy if they do not grow. Outside the church is a world of needy souls who await "the coming of the light." Yet these two drives are one—for the church cannot long sustain an outward growth if within it is weak.

Since one source of the church's internal weakness is its failure to hold the youth it has reared, this book is written as an attempt to point to some of the ways whereby the Christian church may correct that failure. Though the principles and suggestions presented here are applied primarily to young adults, our conviction is that they apply equally to all other church members and groups.

This work is not designed for ministers only but, first of all, for the young adults themselves. For until the young adults of the church demonstrate the gospel they profess by leading themselves in doing the church's work, the "young adult problem" will not be solved.

I am deeply conscious of my debt to others in the preparation of this volume, especially to Bluford L. Adams, Richard T. Baker, M. Leo Rippey, my wife, and the young adults with whom I have worked and who never fail to be inspiring.

J. GORDON CHAMBERLIN

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## *YOUNG ADULTS*



*. . . . the dangerous age of thirty—dangerous that is to youthful ambition, to ideals and visions; the age that makes rovers settle down, drains the fire from ardent youth, turns men into tabby-cats content to sit by the fire.*

—SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON  
in *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*

*And which of all your officers is equal to David, a trusted officer, the king's son-in-law, captain of your bodyguard, and honoured in your household?*

—I Samuel 22:14 (Moffatt)

## *Chapter I*

### YOUNG ADULTS

#### I

"YOUNG ADULTS" IS A COMPARATIVELY NEW TERM. Whenever it is discussed the first question is, "Who are young adults?" "Those between twenty-five and thirty-five years of age," "the young married couples who are just establishing their homes," "young men and women just graduated from college" are frequent answers.

To assume that this relative and ambiguous term "young adults" applies to all young men and women between certain ages, or with a specific marital status, or upon any particular educational level, only creates confusion. Young adults have only one characteristic in common—they are young at the business of being adults. These are the people who are crossing the isthmus from circumscribed and dependent modes of living into the world of responsibility. Some people never take that step—they remain until old age protected by parents, family, or institution. Yet most men and women sometime or other, early or late, voluntarily or by compulsion, take the step which puts them on their own.

Beyond this one fact there is no single characteristic which marks all young adults. Any age classification is only partially adequate. A young man who does not attend college but, living in a rural economy, takes his place of responsibility as soon as he is graduated from high school, marrying and renting a farm, is a young adult at a very early age. On the other hand, the young man who is to be a doctor and must spend seven or eight years after high school in study and internship does not reach "young adulthood" until that many years later.

Maturity can hardly be *the* mark of young adulthood, for most people must meet the problems of adult life whether or not they have attained physical, intellectual, *and* emotional maturity. It is the conviction of one wise writer that all of us are immature and few men or women ever grow out of adolescence.<sup>1</sup> If we accept such a thesis, there is no level of maturity specifically marking young adulthood.

The marital status of a man or woman is not necessarily a mark of young adulthood: some marry early, some late, others never. Yet in one respect, particularly in times when age of marriage is not pressed down by military demands or up by economic depression, marriage indicates a certain measure of ac-

<sup>1</sup> Frankwood E. Williams, *Adolescence: Studies in Mental Hygiene*, Farrar & Rinehart, 1930, pp. 18-19.

ceptance by the husband of responsibility for the support of the home. And even when the new couple is not independent economically, it is still on its own socially.

Young adults may be men or women anywhere from eighteen to forty years of age, though this does not mean that all within this range are young adults. For purposes of administration the majority of the Protestant denominations of the United States have determined by official action of their respective legislative bodies the age grouping in their programs and organizations of Christian education. With some exceptions they agree that those from birth through the eleventh year are to be classified as children, those from twelve through twenty-three as young people, and those twenty-four and over as adults. A few denominations include those through twenty-five years of age in their youth groups, though no denomination requires strict adherence to this age grouping.

These denominations have agreed that, generally speaking, most young adults come within the ages of twenty-four and thirty-five years. Exceptions should be made in particular cases when the experience of some of those under twenty-four warrants their inclusion, and when some just over thirty-five may continue to be members of the group because of conditions in the local church. Organization always in-

volves such age considerations, but they are only incidental to understanding young adults.

Young adults may be married or single. They may have attended college or not. They may be working or unemployed, civilians or soldiers, mature or infantile. This wide range of age and experience means that every variety of personality, interest, and ability is represented among young adults. There are, however, certain general divisions of common interest or concern into which most young adults can be classified—indeed it is necessary to outline such divisions if any effort is made to let young adults work together effectively. Four such groups are: married, single, college, and noncollege.

Married young adults may be almost any age. Their interests tend to be limited by the novelty of establishing a home and by the financial responsibilities thus involved. But they also tend to be the most stable of the young adults in the church or community. The obligations of the home and family soon tie them to work, school, church, civic life, cultural activities, and social exchange.

Single young adults, on the other hand, tend to be more self-centered than family-centered and often need external interests and activities as substitutes for the demanding interests of the home. Lacking the restraining and tempering influence of mates, single

men and women show a higher frequency of eccentricity. An individual who is "alone" often feels forced to erect higher protective walls against the challenges and rebuffs of society. The result is fewer community and group ties and a greater transiency among single than among married young adults.

College-educated young men and women have a common educational background—a background of reorienting their ideas under the pressure of the college community. This is not to say that they have a more adequate philosophy of life than others. In fact, more often than not the college graduate is so much a product of the secularization of modern education that any appeal to him must recognize this influence. For the college student, particularly the one who goes on to take graduate work, "This period of childhood, prolonged to a quarter of a century, is isolated from the life led by the adult. It is 'academic'; under the same kind of regulation that the life of the first-grader is. Lessons are assigned, rolls are called, absences must be excused, all the routine of a subordinate must be observed. . . . Then all at once the cloistered child graduates." <sup>2</sup> Not all college students are prepared for the life they must "commence" upon graduation.

Young men and women who have not gone to

<sup>2</sup> Jessie A. Charters, *Young Adults and the Church*, Abingdon Cokesbury Press, 1936, p. 18.

college usually become "young adults" at an earlier age. They are thrown on their own and must find a place in the life of the community. This usually results in far less upset in their relation to community institutions and less transiency than among college graduates. For noncollege young adults who have lived at home until making the step to go on their own, there has been little opportunity for modification of childhood training and the influences of the community, whether rural or urban, in which they have grown up. If they were started early in church school, they will probably remain in the church. These young adults may be more easily understood because the influences playing upon them have been reduced to the minimum.

Dividing young adults into four general types is not sufficient classification to guide any thorough work with them. Over and above these there are other and more significant characteristics to be analyzed by anyone who really seeks to understand young adults.

## II

The young adult period is one in which each man and woman discloses a unique personality and individuality. It is true that some people become "their final selves" very early in life, but far more frequently

the sheltered life of home, school, or college does not bring out what they really are. Up to this period, whether it comes upon graduation from high school or from college, young people have lived in a world whose goals are clearly defined and prescribed. The ways to get ahead are limited. Success depends mainly upon the grades one receives in his studies. The customs of the home or school, the traditions of the relatively few institutions in which the young person is involved, tend to keep his development channeled and certain. There is a sort of unconscious regimentation and uniformity. At an early period in the life of any child it is possible to see the indications of individuality, and gradually through the period of school life that individuality is developing. Contacts with different subjects, different teachers, different schoolmates—these influence each child differently, and the fanning out of the personality and character is easily perceptible.

But this fanning-out process is suddenly accelerated with graduation from school. Suddenly all the protecting barriers against the multiple influences of the world are destroyed. "From the life of memorizing, idealizing, accepting dicta, he plunges headlong into the life of learning and doing."<sup>3</sup> Instead of facing certainty and prescribed avenues of growth the

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.



young man is suddenly left on his own. Employment is not always certain. Success is not as simple in business as it is in school. Economic well-being is dependent upon a complex variety of qualities, many of them never before called into use. The changes in a person at this period are as rapid and revolutionary as the changes experienced when he entered college. But now the changes reflect far more influences than before.

Tolstoy illustrated this phase of personality development in *War and Peace* when he wrote of the meeting of Rostov and Boris. "They had not met for nearly half a year and, being at the age when young men take their first steps on life's road, each saw immense changes in the other, quite a new reflection of the society in which they had taken those first steps. Both had changed greatly since they last met and both were in a hurry to show the changes that had taken place in them."

But those who do not change as rapidly often change as surely. Certain influences of the business world do not demand as immediate conformity of reaction as the school world may. In the college course it is necessary to take a periodic examination. The reaction of the student is measurable, at least to an extent. There is open conflict of thought and a premium on adjustment. Often this is not true of post-

graduate experience. Only gradually we learn that the successful lawyers live near the country club, that it is good business to be seen regularly in church, or to have our names on charity lists. We are not conscious of conformity or compromise; the influences are often so subtle that years elapse before we discover that we have changed.

But be the change rapid or slow, apparent or hidden, the inevitable result of diverse influences is more diversity and variety of character and personality. The changes are reflected in changed mental attitudes, habits, talents, self-expression; in attitudes toward society; and also in dress, manner, and type of home and associates. No longer is simple classification possible. The different work they do in the community, their varied professions, their expanded interests and concerns, their different experiences—these all contribute to that fanning out of young adult personalities. All of which means that the appeal of the church or any community agency must be as multiform as there are varieties of young adults.

Thus the first requirement for understanding young adults and working with them in the church or in the community is an acceptance of their diversity. Diversity creates more complex problems, but the variety should be welcome. It reflects the catholic inclusiveness of the Christian spirit. It contends that

everyone has a place. Everyone is needed; "Everybody is Somebody." There is work for all to do. Every church program, recognizing this, should open up all the ways necessary to let every one of its members make unique and individual contributions to the church's life and work, to discover interest and talent, and to encourage both.

### III

Understanding young adults demands that we recognize a second common characteristic or, perhaps, look at the same experiences from a different point of view.

When the young man or woman leaves high school and home to enter college, a great readjustment is demanded of him. As we have mentioned, there is a new environment. New standards must be met. A new relation to friends and acquaintances prevails. As the college student takes his courses, his development is not left to chance. He faces positive challenges of new ideas and new personalities. He is forced to react. It is hardly possible to be unmolded by college experience. Papers must be written and examinations taken. Graduation depends upon reaction registered in sufficient grades.

This reorientation is recognized by the church in special work with students. New terminology, new

ideology, new concepts, new experiences are all called upon. It is understood that if the student is to have an adequate philosophy of life he should completely rethink every part of his religious beliefs in the light of his new experiences.

But this college reorientation, this new philosophy of life developed by the student, is not adequate for the young adult. Upon graduation from college the individual again meets a new kind of world outside of the classroom and has the same experience as the high school graduate. Again a new environment begins to play upon his attitudes and interests. New standards must be met. A new relation with friends and acquaintances prevails. Instead of the positive and open challenges of a college professor the graduate meets the subtle challenges of world influences. He becomes "enmeshed in a web of organic corporate relationships which surround his life in concentric circles of ever widening radius—his family, his neighborhood, his race, his people, his nation, all humanity. . . . Each relationship conditions and molds both the life and the thought of every person in greater or less measure, usually in more subtle and pervasive ways than he realizes." <sup>4</sup>

Too often the power of environment upon young

<sup>4</sup> *The Message and Decisions of Oxford on Church, Community and State*, Universal Christian Council, 1937, p. 14.

adults is grossly underestimated. Any idealism learned in school or church gets a cold reception in the world. There are few influences which make a conscious effort to elevate the convictions and talents of the individual. The exigencies of a commercial civilization demand that all conduct be colored by the economic interests which make the difference between comfort and poverty. The social standards of a community elicit conformity as surely as do school instructors. The society into which we move rapidly becomes a teacher, but more than a teacher—a dictator which challenges every belief and conviction which we have previously held. It has been said that in India “the social order molds 350,000,000 people every thirty years . . . . into its own image.”<sup>5</sup> Our society does the same to its people.

Gradually and subtly the young adult is being made over. Old answers no longer satisfy. The remoteness which academic study often encourages is no longer possible. And just as the college student is forced to rethink his whole philosophy of life, so the young adult develops a new philosophy also. And, very clearly, this one is the product of far more influences than any college can ever provide.

<sup>5</sup> *The World Mission of the Church*, Findings and Recommendations of the International Missionary Council at Madras, India, December, 1938, p. 106. Published by the International Missionary Council, New York.

The church dare not allow these changes to go unnoticed. It should take the initiative. Wisdom demands that young adults be led through another complete rethinking of their philosophy, just as they were led earlier in life, whether college students or not. In terms of their new environment they should be led to re-examine what the Christian life means, their understanding and appreciation of the Bible, and their knowledge of church history. They should be encouraged to reappraise the church's world mission and the Christian's responsibility for social change as well as their personal conduct and responsibility for group morality. Any worthy young adult program must be built upon the acceptance of an inevitable reorientation during the young adult period. Whether they know it or not young adults "become little children," and most of the things they have learned in earlier experiences are waiting to be reinterpreted, put into new language, and given new meaning.

#### IV

Because the young adult period is usually the earliest at which the young man or woman settles in a community, there is observable a third characteristic common to most young adults. Under normal circumstances it is during young adulthood that men and women decide their permanent type of employment

and often their permanent community of residence. These may be modified in particular instances by the economic situation of a particular community or by national and international developments. Nevertheless, the significance of the process of "settling down" should be recognized by anyone interested in understanding young adults.

Most young adults settle down. There are in many communities individuals to whom "vivacity" has become a habit and who so worship at the shrine of "Youth" that they never allow themselves to become attached to the community, to its institutions, or to each other. But these are a minority. Most young men and women want to become part of the stabilizing influences of church, school, business, and social life. In the process the young adults themselves become more stable. There are increased possibilities of interesting them in the future welfare of their children through improved community agencies. It is often possible to secure in this process a more serious attention to the civic and religious problems affecting family life.

Unless the church is on hand to influence the settling down, that process may be very lopsided and dangerous. A couple may "settle" into work and play and leave out worship. The church's task of winning people is much more difficult after they have settled

down than before. But even more dangerous is the prevalent idea that the church is just one of the institutions of the community along with professional clubs, social groups, labor unions, lodges, businesses, civic offices, and recreational organizations. The church is either the heart and core of all, standing for a spirit which must infuse and unite these varied activities of life, or it has lost its genius. The Christian church comes first. The value of each other community activity depends upon the spiritual foundations and environment maintained for it. The church's responsibility is for that spiritual foundation and environment.

The tendency in every community is to give time to the activity most strongly demanding attention. On such a basis the church is often forgotten, and this is not always the fault of the young people. The church may be afraid to assert its rightful place and challenge the attractions of other community activities for fear of losing members. But compromise loses members just as surely, for they are lost if their effectiveness is lost. No apology should be made for demanding at least as much of young adults as their lodges and clubs do. The church—for the good of its members—should not be afraid to enter into out-and-out competition with the demands of the community which, unchallenged, would result in the one-sided development of the church's families and the



dangerous weakening of the church's unique message. Every other loyalty in the community should be subject to loyalty to the Christian church.

It is not time alone that the church should demand. The multiple activities of the community and the competition of business encourage the self-centeredness of the young adult. There is the temptation to try to keep up with everyone else on the social and economic level. There is the attraction of the family and the warmth of the home to give security which so many young adults think is all-sufficient. Thus the home and the job can take up all the interest and attention of the young family and leave all agencies for community improvement without their talent and energy. Time without real interest is worthless.

Or again, there are many young adults who react to the competition in which they are set with a sudden swing to conservatism. High ideals may have been built up in the school, but the first contact with the real world topples them. The young person, "reflecting the world into which he has been set," frequently becomes "harder" than his elders ever were when competition becomes a way of life. Instead of young adults being the generation which will remake our society and help build a new world, as some people blandly consider them, they are not infrequently the most reactionary members of the community and the

ones least interested in building a better world. They seem to feel a heightened imperative to get, somehow or other, a toe hold in the world as it is before it comes toppling down on them. Often this feeling is augmented by the very complexity of the world which the young people thought they would improve.

Thus it is not uncommon to find among young adults the most frustrated and disillusioned group in the community. When their entire future is uncertain and their hopes are dashed by failure to get started as early as others, when they have a growing fear that their children will have to live in a world far different from the one they have known, young adults sometimes resign themselves at an early age to disillusionment.

Frustration may come, also, from the types of employment young men and women find. If they become a part of vast industrial concerns where they work on "dead-end" jobs on the "line," or move into professional or clerical positions with no future, giving them only monotony, a deep impatience with all of life may naturally grow up. One of the tragedies of our nonvital civilian life is reflected in the assertion by an army officer that the best fighters are not dashing youths, but the young married men who find in the military life an escape from the deadening routine of

monotonous jobs, children, financial worries, and the petty problems of the home.

Much cynicism, too, is found among young adults. Frequently—particularly where their college training has left them with nothing positive, but only skepticism of all that other men may attempt for the betterment of the world—young adults are extremely cynical. Doubting becomes a fashion. The scientific method learned in school can tear down what nature and early training have produced, but it cannot build it up again or provide a substitute. So uncertainty, frustration, and cynicism often lead to many forms of escapism: reaction, disinterestedness, abnormal imitation of some class characteristic, or reversion to the protected arena of perennial scholastic endeavor.

The church should certainly be aware of these possibilities and be prepared to make its peculiar contribution in integrating young adults into the community. When the church loses the initiative in community integration, it ceases to challenge the loyalty of its aggressive and community-minded members. The appeal of the church should not be on the basis of what its young people need, or think they need; rather it should set its young adults face to face with the needs of others around them; it should present to them the most pressing and urgent tasks the church has to do. Young adults deserve such a challenge.

## V

All that has been said in analyzing the term "young adult" and the general characteristics of those who are going through the process of young adulthood is of no especial importance in itself. Young adulthood is one of the many periods in every person's life. That there are certain characteristics marking this period is no justification for an undue concern or for greater attention than is given to childhood, adolescence, youth, or old age. However, in the church the term "young adult" has a special significance. The recent increase of concern for young adults arises from the fact that in the church there is a *young adult problem*. And there is a young adult problem because in the church the transfer from youth to adulthood has been delayed. This delay is an institutional characteristic of the church.

Within an organization so definitely defined by membership as the church, where leadership is nearly always limited to a minority and where changes of responsibility are very gradual, there arises the problem of using the available talent and ability of the new and maturing members. Where those talents are fully used, there is no young adult problem. But where those talents are not used—where a time lag is allowed to develop between the training of the young men

and women and the use of their latent talents—a very difficult problem results.

The church is one of the few institutions in our society which has difficulty in using its potential human resources. In most institutions of our economic, political, and professional life competition is the way of life, and the young and aggressive rise as rapidly as their powers develop. In an industry, for instance, where men and women are replaced when they do not produce adequate results, there is no chance for a young adult problem. Though the dismissed employee may never again find a job, the individual industry is saved from the problem.

On the other hand, within the American economy at large there has been, until the outbreak of war with the consequent drafting of the manpower of the nation for military purposes, an acute young adult problem. Young men trained in the best of universities as expert engineers or doctors were forced to take jobs as taxi drivers or filling-station attendants. Young women, accomplished musicians, took jobs as stenographers, typing day after day until the fingers lost the feel of the strings and the hopes of years gradually slipped into the mists of dejection and bitterness. These were unused young adults with talents going to waste.

Such conditions do not exist in young, unde-

veloped areas, either in a nation's economy or within the church. There was no young adult problem on the American frontier. Men and women of twenty-five and thirty-five were the adults who led the way to the West. There was no young adult problem in the early Christian church. There was a place, a task, a responsibility for every able-spirited disciple who felt the Master's call.

But earlier Bible history describes a limited older culture which failed to use the latent abilities of its own young. David was an unused young adult. For years he was the people's choice for king. But there was no way, then, to use two kings in Israel. Saul held the throne. It was not subject to competition among the able; it was limited. So David was forced to leave the land and wait until the death of Saul brought a nation's demand for his ability and talent.

This practice—asking able young men and women to wait for years before being put to work—has been followed by a large section of the contemporary American church. The church has trained its children, preparing them for leadership in the divine society of the church. It has provided youth with activities, clubs, leaders, conferences, student centers, student movements, and institutes. And then it has asked its trained and able young men and women, who are rising rapidly to places of responsibility and

leadership in the community, to wait—often for years, until they are no longer young—before they can help do any meaningful part of the church's work. Some churches have thought they were using their young adults, but they were only giving them "made work," inconsequential and insignificant tasks that provided no real challenge and could never sustain mature and creative interest.

The most difficult young adult problem the church will have to face will come upon the return of its soldiers at the end of the war. The young adult problem of the past will be as nothing compared with its future forms. It is stupid to image that all soldiers will return with a "military mind"—there will be as many varied reactions as there are individuals. Some will be hardened, others softened. Some will be more cynical than others. Some will be convinced that army regulations bring out the best in men. Others will swear that now that they have saved the country they are the only ones able to run it. To some, human life will continue to be infinitely cheap. Some will look forward to the less taxing demands of civilian life; others will be very much discouraged by its monotony. Yes, every type will return.

Yet they will all be men who have been told over and over again that they were needed, that they were important, that every ounce of their energy and

talent was significant to the nation. But what will they be told when they return, when the spiral of salaries and prices is down instead of up? What will they be told by the church—that they are needed, that every ounce of energy and talent is significant to the Christian enterprise, or that they are to be good boys and attend church regularly, watching others do the leading? This has been the church's counsel so often. Will the error be repeated once more?

There is need throughout the church for intelligent consideration of this failure of the church, in its organizational rigidity, to provide for the latent talents of the rising generation channels which will allow it to undertake the tremendous unfinished tasks of the Christian fellowship. Who can tell but that out of "the return" may come a new period of creativity similar to that at the close of the Civil War, when so many of the church's present youth movements had their inception. Is the church ready for that?

## VI

Within this organizational pattern there is an experiential pattern with which the church ought to be equally familiar. It is as foolish to think that just because a person is young he is a good leader as it is to deny all leadership ability among the young. Young adults are not more Christian than their elders. They



are not more able than their seniors. Their training in youth groups has not given them all a more prophetic insight into the nature and function of the church than others. So it is not on the basis of their superiority that the demand should be made for their being given a formative place in the church's work and program. As church members their abilities should be used, but young adults should be measured by the same requirements as others.

Yet the last generation has witnessed a peculiar advance in the preparation process of the church's youth. And the good or evil of that preparation is reflected for the first time in young adults. When the time comes that men and women can cease receiving and begin to give, we can learn what they have really received.

What are some of the "products of the past" which face young adult groups of the present? Many churches have been teaching their young people a thin, secularized version of the Christian gospel which does not prepare them to propagate a vital and rigorous faith in the future church. Frequently young people have received the impression that the church school or Sunday school is a childish activity, that when they are graduated from high school they also graduate into an adult world which gives them an

extra hour of leisure each Sunday morning. How can they ever again be amenable to continual study of the nature and task of the Christian enterprise? Certainly there are youth who have been taught that "the achievement of justice and social peace in human society is a comparatively easy task," or that "men can be beguiled from following their own interests and can be persuaded to espouse the general interest by some simple process of social reorganization or educational device."<sup>6</sup> Such young people are not prepared to carry forward a Christianity that is adequately profound to sustain faith in the crisis of our day. And there are many churches who have been so anxious to keep their youth that they have made a practice of "giving them what they want," until the young people have developed an unwarranted sense of their own importance.

It becomes a duty of the church, then, to re-appraise its own teaching process and try to prevent and correct some of the misconceptions of its young adults. They have grown up, often, clinging to ideas accepted in more cynical years, convinced that the church is hidebound to tradition, limited in their understanding because of their narrow experiences. Some will still believe that they must have a group

<sup>6</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, "A Faith for History's Greatest Crisis," *Fortune*, July, 1942, p. 122.

to press for their rights, while others will feel that they know all the answers.

Such errors as these are reflected, as in a mirror, when young people are first placed on their own. If we would know the results of our elementary and junior work in religious education, the validity of our educational philosophy, we have only to analyze objectively the young adults, the products of that training, when they cross the bridge from youth to adulthood.

Seldom is the interest of the young adult in the church automatic. It is hardly true, as some have implied, that "these restless, idealistic, purposeful young people have deep spiritual wants. We know . . . that if they can find what they want in the Church, they will eagerly seek it there."<sup>7</sup> The problem is not so simple. It is very complex. This age group is as varied as humanity itself. And the slow increase in church membership in the light of the vast church school attendance in this nation is an indication that there has been inadequate development among young people of that loyalty to the church of Christ which gives them a continued meaningful place regardless of age.

## VII

Every evaluation of a particular period of develop-

<sup>7</sup> Jessie A. Charters, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

ment must take into account not only factors of age, experience, environment, and ideals, but also current events. Every evaluation of young adults must constantly be modified by the pressures of the world crisis, which affects them more directly than any other age group in the church. Young people who have not yet married or selected their permanent jobs are not so completely upset by military demands as are young adults who have just settled down, who have family responsibilities, and who must leave professional and business contacts. When these young adults return from military service and attempt to rejoin civilian life, an even more critical young adult problem will face the church.

Yet, as one writer analyzes the situation, "Many people are getting a kind of elation out of the extreme social approval of their activities in connection with the war effort. They are seeming to be their most unselfish selves, and they are able to get a kind of ego-satisfaction that they have not had in more normal times. That this elation has been so prominent in public reaction to the world situation today is a sign of the spiritual depravity of the self under normal times. . . . This elation is part rationalization for the fact that all our life is now caught in war." \*

\* *Newsletter of Friends of the Christian Fellowship*, Vol. I, No. 8, p. 3.

The revolutionary character of the contemporary world crisis will not only destroy all traditional claims of the church upon the young people it has trained and result in greatly changed methods and procedures of work for young adults in the churches, but it will demand that young adults aggressively address themselves to the revolutionary gospel which is "sufficient unto the day" and work out their salvation by faith.

This generation of young adults stands in a particularly dangerous, yet strategic, position. It is dangerous because this group faces the future of "after the war" with few assurances that the world they are prepared for will last through the coming decade. The tendency will be toward a "sellout" of what they have been taught, including the essentials of Christianity, for the kind of life they feel to be inevitable in the future. It is strategic because if something can be done now to draw this large group into a vital relationship with the world church and its mission, not only will it "save" many of these young adults by giving them a transcending loyalty during uncertain years, but it will also help provide the foundation for a church that can survive our extended crisis.

*A UNIVERSAL DYNAMIC*

*Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*

—MATTHEW 28:19-20

*The Christian Church offers more hope for the rehabilitation of international society than any other institution in the world; . . . if it could have a confident understanding of its mission and achieve a sufficient loyalty to its faith, it might be used of God to bring the world out of this present chaos into a brighter day.*

—ROSWELL P. BARNES  
in *A Christian Imperative*

## *Chapter II*

### A UNIVERSAL DYNAMIC

#### I

WHEN A NEW ERA OR AREA OF OPPORTUNITY IS DISCOVERED, it is usually the mechanical and technical advances which first catch the interest of men. The invention of the airplane excited men's attention first by the technical advance and only second by the implications of that invention. The construction of a new church building often fills the parishioners with more pride in the unusual engineering and design displayed in the new building than in the additional service which the institution will be able to render in the community. This pattern is repeated in the opening of any new phase of church activity or development. When attention is drawn to an age group previously unexploited, the inevitable temptation is to devise methods and techniques for working this new mine. Later the time comes for a reappraisal of the direction in which this newly organized group is to move. What are the goals and the higher purposes toward which its leaders are to work?

This is not to say that it is always necessary to



yield to temptation. Every effort should be made in the local church to develop new groups on the basis of an adequate philosophy and goal, rather than just for the purpose of additional numbers or of adding another organization to the church's list. Every group should be organized with the essential purpose and work of the church in mind.

Whatever future goals may be, the young adult work of the church up to the present time has over-emphasized the organizational problems, crowding out consideration of the deeper problems to which the young adults should be giving their attention. It is now time to lift the sights and examine the place which young adults hold and can hold in the world Christian enterprise and the goals toward which they, with all their fellows in the Christian church, should work.

The most significant development of Protestant Christianity during the last decade has been the holding of three world-wide church conferences. Between July 12 and 26, 1937, delegates from nearly every non-Roman Christian church and from most countries of the world met at Oxford, England, for the World Conference on Church, Community, and State.<sup>1</sup> Immediately afterward a similar conference,

<sup>1</sup> The principal topics discussed were: The Church and Community, The Church and State, The Church and Economic Order, The Church and Education, and The World Church and the World of Nations.

The World Conference on Faith and Order, was held in Edinburgh, Scotland.<sup>2</sup> Sixteen months later the third world conference was held at Tambaram, Madras, India. There, between December 12 and 29, 1938, delegates equally divided between East and West, or "older" and "younger" churches, met for the World Meeting of the International Missionary Council.<sup>3</sup> These are commonly called the Edinburgh, Oxford, and Madras conferences.

In these conferences, coming at the end of a decade of ecumenical endeavor, are dramatically demonstrated a uniformity of conviction and a sense of common purpose among the numerous branches of Protestantism which should be the source of profound hope. It is of highest significance that as the world is being torn apart by the explosives and frictions of contemporary economic, political, and military developments there should emerge, at just this juncture in history, three international conferences which could come to basic agreements not only on the nature and function of the Christian church, but also

<sup>2</sup> This conference discussed such topics as: The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, The Church of Christ and the Word of God, The Church of Christ: Ministry and Sacraments, and The Church's Unity in Life and Worship.

<sup>3</sup> The report of this conference, *The World Mission of the Church*, deals with such themes as: The Faith by Which the Church Lives, The Witness of the Church, The Inner Life of the Church, and Co-operation and Unity.

on the immediate tasks that lie before the Christian family around the world. They imply a recognition on the part of every communion that what brothers in Christ, "whate'er their name or sign," have in common is far more important than that on which they differ.

As the import of these three conferences is appreciated in every local Christian church in every land, there should be lighted a fire of enthusiasm and purpose pervading every group, every church activity, every statement of creed, every meeting in which Christians gather for work or worship. No longer need we blush in shame for the denominational divisions which have hindered the work of the Christian church so often in the past, for we know that undergirding the local church there is an essential worldwide unity which is far more significant. No more need we be uncertain about the future task and direction of the church's work. The signposts have been set up in the most amazing witness the world has yet seen; and it is for each Christian, each group, each local church, to share in the world mission of the church as revealed by these conferences.

From a discussion of the failure of the church to use its able and energetic young adults we now turn to a brief review of the undone tasks which Madras and Oxford, particularly, point out and at which the

church should set every one of its members to work. In taking part in this great task everyone should feel that he shares with all others in the total task. No effort will be made to present an exhaustive quotation of the suggestions and analyses of Madras and Oxford. We will try to catch the direction in which they moved—and that was toward the elaboration of a world strategy of Christian service and advance. No longer is the church uncertain of its mission. Its task ahead is clearer than ever before.

The agreement between the three conferences was not the superficial grasping for expedients in a crisis. It grew out of a profound agreement about both the nature of the gospel the church is called to proclaim and the nature of the church itself. The Madras conference used the definition of the church which had been adopted at Edinburgh as the basis of its work. An understanding of the nature of the church grew out of a remarkable agreement as to the meaning of Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God. All three conferences recognized that the church is in the midst of a continuous historical process—that the kingship of God in men's lives has been accomplished to a degree, but that its final fulfillment is yet to come. "The Kingdom of God . . . is the reign of God which both has come and is coming." <sup>4</sup> "The Kingdom of

<sup>4</sup> *Oxford*, p. 31.

God is within history and yet it is beyond history. . . . .  
 The Kingdom of God is both present and future. . . . .  
 It is our task and our hope.”<sup>5</sup>

It was within this framework that the conferences saw the task of the Christian enterprise—the task which should and must be done if the Christian church is to remain true to its message: it must be “in very deed the Church.”<sup>6</sup>

Any realistic and comprehensive survey of the church’s task in our time eliminates at once the idea that being the church is one single thing. No longer can intelligent Christians believe that Sunday worship services, be they ever so impressive, are the one and only responsibility of the church. Social action, religious education, evangelism, youth groups, visiting the sick, music—whenever priority is claimed for one of these, someone is demonstrating ignorance of the church’s real function. The church is called to do all of them, and more. Its duty is “to proclaim the Gospel of God’s love in Jesus Christ to all mankind, to administer the Sacraments, to fulfil the Christian ideal of fellowship, and to guide the souls of her children in the ways of holiness.”<sup>7</sup>

The great significance of this general agreement

<sup>5</sup> *Madras*, p. 106.

<sup>6</sup> *Oxford*, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

among the evangelical churches of the world on the theological basis of the church's mission is heightened by the fact that the conferences then went forward, listing the tremendous tasks to be done by the world church and giving particular suggestions on how those tasks are to be attacked. The conferences did more than to declare the world unity of Protestantism; they outlined a world plan of advance.

## II

Experience in the church, either on a local or a world-wide basis, will lead the intelligent Christian to understand the crucial need of an effective unity within the church. The multitudinous branches of Protestantism have competed long enough. The creative fire of each has had its chance to burn and make its distinctive mark upon the body of Christendom. Now competition leads only to weakness; for the disunity implies a denial of the fact of Christian fellowship, tends to force the exponents of each branch into a one-sided emphasis upon its distinctive contribution, and burdens the church with overhead. It keeps the church from standing with a united front or speaking with a united voice when the world desperately needs just such united church leadership. Though unity has been attained at the very top, there is the need for that unity to grow from the "grass

roots" through the churches in every local community. "There is a call from God to-day to every local congregation, to realize at any cost in its own self that unity, transcending all differences and barriers of class, social status, race, nation, which we believe the Holy Spirit can and will create in those who are ready to be led by Him. . . . To different Churches in any district, to come together for a local ecumenical witness in worship and work. . . . The Church has been called into existence by God not for itself but for the world. Only by going out of itself in the work of Christ can it find unity in itself." <sup>8</sup>

But the church cannot wait until it has attained organizational unity before it attempts to perform the other great tasks to which it is called. The task of evangelism must go on. The world has not been won for Christ. We cannot "see all the nations bending before the God we love." The church must continue to let men know, by whatever medium is available, about the Spirit of love which is God, about the revelation of God's nature in Jesus Christ. "Essentially evangelism is the instrument whereby the living God through His Holy Spirit makes His impact upon the spirits of men." <sup>9</sup> Evangelism is needed by men outside the church as well as by nominal members of

<sup>8</sup> *Oxford*, p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> *Madras*, p. 36.

the church. If the church does not continue to grow and to maintain a constant pressure upon the world, it will die. "The Church must either make its impact upon the secular world of to-day and win it for Christ, or the secular world will increasingly encroach upon the spiritual life of the Church, blunting its witness and dimming its vision."<sup>10</sup> Thus continuous evangelism is needed in every community of the so-called Christian nations as well as on the foreign fields.

The task of education must go on. Nothing could be more absurd than for the church to continue an aggressive evangelism and not balance it with an equally effective educational program. Education of children in the public school is of equal importance with education in the church in developing the spiritual basis of a child's life. Sometimes it is much more important. Often the work of training the young seems very prosaic. But the significance of an adequate educational program throughout the church cannot be overemphasized. "Education is and must always be a major concern of the Church. . . . Christian education includes 'religious education,' whether as instruction in the faith or as training in worship and conduct. But its range is wider. It presents the Christian affirmations in the context of all learning and the growing experience of life. It makes no sharp distinction

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.



between sacred and secular studies. It claims the whole man and his whole life for God. . . . Essentially, it is with the educational process itself that Christian education is concerned.”<sup>11</sup> Here is a task for many members of every church—“the supply, training, and continuous encouragement of Christian teachers.”<sup>12</sup>

The task of teaching men to read must go on. “Over 90 per cent of the adherents of non-Christian religions are illiterate. What is equally distressing is that in some lands many Christians, including some of their leaders, are unable to read their own Bibles and hymnbooks. . . . Banishing of illiteracy is one of the world’s greatest needs and an opportunity for service which the Christian Church cannot forego.”<sup>13</sup>

At the same time the task of providing Christian literature for men who can read has not been met. “There are vast areas where there is little or no literature of any kind; there are churches whose whole Christian literature can be tied up in a pocket handkerchief; in some lands opportunities of publication open to us to-day may be closed to-morrow; and hardly anywhere is the production of Christian literature keeping pace with progress in literacy and the growth of an educated community.”<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Madras*, pp. 73-74.

<sup>12</sup> *Oxford*, p. 66.

<sup>13</sup> *Madras*, pp. 95, 97.

<sup>14</sup> *Madras*, p. 87.

The task of healing must go on. In every part of the world where the Christian church has been at work it has led in the ministry to the physical ills of men. But the dramatic advance has not been sufficient to provide all the medical needs of every nation; it has not been sufficient for even the wealthiest of nations. Whole areas of medical service are still comparatively untouched. Preventive medicine, public health services, and hospitals in rural areas are needs in every country of the globe. And the increase in every phase of medical needs has already become so great as a result of the war that the undone tasks seem overwhelming. "The churches, older and younger, must continue and extend this compassionate ministry of health and healing."<sup>15</sup>

In order to carry on increased evangelism, education, and healing, the local church must do the larger share of the work. It needs imagination to see that the small efforts of any one church, when set side by side with similar efforts of every other church, are a vital part of the tremendous world-wide impact which the Christian church is making. In these areas the church has been at work—and has made glorious records—and the church will continue to work in them, meeting the tragic consequences of a period of world war. But that is not enough.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

Above and beyond these three areas of evangelism, education, and healing are many other undone tasks calling the church into the social and economic relationships of men. Multitudes of specific needs in each field await consecrated hands and hearts to begin their service in obedience to the demands of the gospel.

- The unspeakable outrages committed in every land—our own included—against children of God just be-  
Christian action. White crucifies black; German liquidates Jew; Japanese claim to be the “chosen race”; Poles are sterilized because of race alone; Chinese are excluded from American citizenship. In a world more surely bound together than ever before such divisiveness can be only fatal. But whatever political values there may be in overcoming the vast race hatreds of our time, the Christian church is the only institution with a message of hope which speaks of a spirit that can make all men brothers, which tells of a Father in heaven who loves his children of every race. Within the church is the spiritual mortar which alone can bind together the diverse races of men. But is the church witnessing to its own genius? Is it purifying itself of any racial discriminations it practices? Is it making its gospel felt in every community and country where racial discrimination, hatred, or persecution is carried on? A blanket challenge can be

made: "The Church should exert its influence on the side of all movements working for the full and equal sharing by all races in the common life of mankind." <sup>16</sup>

Caught in the meshes of total war, the whole world looks today to the institution which can keep love alive amid hate, compassion amid brutality, and service in the midst of destruction. "In this time when brute force stalks the earth, the Church is summoned to bear courageous and unflinching witness to the nations that the base purposes of men, whether of individuals or of groups, cannot prevail against the will of the Holy and Compassionate God. . . . It is under obligation to speak fearlessly against aggression, brutality, persecution and all wanton destruction of human life and torturing of human souls." <sup>17</sup> Here is an undone task if ever there was one!

In such a world the divisions between races and nations are not the only barriers to Christian fellowship. There are the outcast, the underprivileged, the persecuted, the despised in the community and beyond the community. Toward these the Christian and his church are always called to demonstrate Christian charity and service. So many, many opportunities are to be found in every community for taking

<sup>16</sup> *Madras*, p. 116.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

part in these Christian tasks that no church—no church member—should go unchallenged.

Action in this realm brings into the open conflicts within the church itself between those who believe in alternative forms of economic organization, national or international; but certain basic and minimal economic requirements should be enunciated by the church as essential to justice. The terms might be those of Oxford: "The obligation to love our neighbours as ourselves places clearly under condemnation all social and economic systems which give one man undue advantage over others. . . . It must challenge any social system which provides social privileges without reference to the social functions performed by individuals, or which creates luxury and pride on the one hand, and want and insecurity on the other."<sup>18</sup> Upon the basis of some such minimal statement the church is carried directly into a deep and profound concern for housing, industrial relations, recreation in rural and urban areas, unemployment, or any other area of human experience and social relationships "where existing conditions continuously undo its work and thwart the will of God for His children."<sup>19</sup>

"On every side the walls are down,  
The gates swing wide to every land"

<sup>18</sup> *Oxford*, p. 34.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

must be the feeling of every Christian who catches the immense dynamic and vitality of a world-wide church which fully realizes this mission. Innumerable calls for help surge across the landscape of humanity. Who could say the church's work is done, its task finished? Dark as the night may be, difficult though it is to muster the forces of the Christian fellowship in an effective attack on any one of the many jobs pointed out by Madras and Oxford, there is still an exhilaration that buoys up the Christian—a conviction that he is called for such an hour as this.

### III

Though the elaboration and enunciation of this dynamic vision of a world mission will give a great incentive to action in every part of the globe, there remain many difficult problems. These visions of work to be done will not be realized easily. Before these projected programs can be carried out effectively, every phase of the development of the local church must feel itself a part of the total world mission. Sharing in so vast an enterprise should give new meaning to all that the church does. This is not always the case. There are churches "so enmeshed in the world that they dare not speak God's full word of truth unafraid, so divided that they cannot speak that word with full power, so sullied by pettiness and worldli-

ness that the face of Christ cannot be clearly discerned in them.”<sup>20</sup>

But these are not the only difficulties of which we should be especially aware. We must lead in reappraising the relation of the local church to the world church, for the church is involved in the dilemma of having achieved a unity and a goal on an international level far beyond the attainments of local churches. But the world church is not an independent and separate entity; its foundation is the local church. It is when the local church becomes an ecumenical church that each member can understand his place in a fellowship that is universal. Apart from this the local church has no meaning. It derives its meaning and significance from the fact that it is a part of a world-wide spiritual fellowship, the product of twenty centuries of world growth. Only as the individual church understands this interrelation and interaction can any hope of universal advance be realized.

The dual responsibility is clearest when the church is tested by fire. When the ultimate tests come to the world church, its outward forms may not abide—and remain Christian—unless it is built firmly upon the many local churches which are willing to play their part as members of the universal body of Christ.

<sup>20</sup> *Madras*, p. 14.

This forcing of the existence of the church back upon the individual communion in local congregations has been the experience of Christians in many countries during the last decade. The denominational authority and officers may be destroyed, as may interdenominational agencies, but the Christian church will not be destroyed as long as there are individual churches knit together by an appreciation of their ecumenical and uniquely Christian character.

The interrelation between the local church and the world church must constantly adjust to the dynamic developments of the world's needs and the expanding Christian witness. It is easier for world conferences to move forward rapidly than it ever is to get all local churches to do the same. The world conferences may come to a clear understanding of the peculiar function, the nature, and the mission of the church; but the local church may not experience such clarity of purpose because within its fellowship are members of every stage of Christian development, personal characteristics, and conviction. The world church may establish agreements of friendliness and co-operation, such as have been adopted on a world scale, thus almost completely eliminating competition between denominations in the mission fields. But the tragic competition still continues in numberless communities, and it is the part of folly to believe that this



competition will be easily or quickly overcome in a true Christian fellowship. The ecumenical—the universal and world-wide—nature of Christian demands and precepts is clearly stated and understood in the world conferences, but in many local churches there is no feeling of responsibility for universal tasks, and this feeling takes time to develop.

Here is one of the major problems for those who are now taking over the leadership of the Christian church: to resolve the dilemma of a world church which sees its mission clearly but lacks the strength, which comes only with real responsibility for universal tasks in the local church, to perform its mission.

#### IV

There is a second major problem which the rising leaders of the church must tackle. They are obliged to resolve not only the dilemma of a world church that has weak foundations within itself, but also the dilemma of the Christian church which on a world scale is revolutionary but locally is conservative. On a world scale the Christian church is the most revolutionary force there is. The culture, the philosophy, the goals of living, and the social relationships of people on every continent are feeling the impact of a vital force—the gospel of Jesus Christ—that is gradually turning their world upside down. In the United

States this is less true than elsewhere. Here there has been a pronounced tendency to identify the kingdom of God with American democracy. The American church is essentially conservative, in many places socially reactionary. In rural communities it has become a bulwark, not of the poor and destitute, but of the dominant political party. In the cities it has, in the main, remained strong among those with comfortable economic incomes.

It is true that within the American church there is a seed of world-consciousness as truly revolutionary as is the church in other lands, but that seed is so tempered and overbalanced with the weight of conservative church members that it represents only a minority of the church.

Unification of the church will tend to augment, not lessen, this conservatism. As the size of the church increases, it is progressively difficult to express the dynamic of Christianity in church-wide action, because increasing size not only slows down change within the church but also heightens the tendency to uniformity. As the local church is the final bastion of support of the world church, just so is it the vanguard of any creative change within the institution. Here is the principal field for creative approaches to churchmanship—the local church. Here is the great opportunity for young adults—the most significant

battleground on which the rising talent of the church may attack every one of the tasks which the world conferences have laid down as the wisest future course for the Christian enterprise. The vast reservoir of ability and talent among the young adults of the church could be directed at the largest and most trying problems of the world church. For the church is involved in a struggle of unprecedented proportions, and it cannot separate itself from that struggle.

The significance of the task in the local church is not religious only—it is social as well. Many church members, lacking imagination, feel that they have fulfilled their Christian obligations by giving something of their means to support the church's worldwide mission. The blind spot seems to be very close to home. The tasks of the world church are identical with the tasks of the home church. How can universality ever become real unless we bravely attack the senseless divisions of Christianity in our own community? Evangelism on a world scale has meaning only when we revitalize an evangelistic fervor at home. Lofty descriptions of the church's influence on education are empty when the home church does nothing about the secularized and materialistic education of its children in the public schools. We have more Christian literature in America than in China, but what proportion of the pulp magazines sold at the

corner newsstand reflect a Christian view of life? When the Negroes, Jews, or Japanese in our own community are segregated, are not allowed to worship with us, are given only the mean jobs, are outcasts, what right have we to expect the more dramatic racial issues on a world scale to be solved? What part does the church play in local politics? Does it try to curb delinquency and crime? Is it a potent group fostering clean civic government?

Here—close at hand—is the arena into which the church is called as surely as it is called into world-wide activity. The church is “one and indivisible.” Just as the world church is founded upon many local churches, so the world mission of the church is fulfilled not only by dramatic action far away, but by the same action within numberless communities, fostered by Christians who respond to the demand of service.

## V

The third great problem facing the rising leadership of the church is the imperative which drives the church to undertake its world mission quickly and effectively because it is threatened by greater external opposition than in many centuries. The sheer weight of population makes the problem increasingly difficult, for “there are more non-Christians in the

world now than there were ten years ago.”<sup>21</sup> Christians have been persecuted in Europe and Asia and the work of the world church has been stopped in many areas of conflict. A new pagan nationalism has arisen in the last decade which in many nations has tried to substitute the worship of race or nation for Christian worship and has demanded men’s absolute allegiance and supreme devotion. Nationalism has taken its most tragic and demonic form in fascism, which has spread far beyond the confines of the Axis nations. Communism as a philosophy is clearly opposed to Christianity. “It is atheistic in its conception of ultimate reality and materialistic in its view of man and his destiny. Its utopian philosophy of history lacks the essential Christian notes of divine judgment, divine governance, and eternal victory. Its revolutionary strategy involves the disregard of the sacredness of personality which is fundamental in Christianity.”<sup>22</sup> Even where the opposition to Christianity has not been so obvious, there has been a gradual secularization of life—a critical overthrow of standards of personal morality, the idealization of the acquisition of wealth as a criterion of success, and a lowering of the dignity of human personality. These are anti-Christian and, given the opportunity, are as deadly

<sup>21</sup> *Madras*, p. 30.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

to the ongoing vitality of Christianity as is outright opposition.

## VI

These external threats are serious, but there is within the world church the ability and the power to triumph over them. We recount them because we have a profound faith that God has a larger purpose for his church in the future than in the past, and that if we obey his holy will, purge the church of its faults, and commit ourselves to him, the ultimate victory will be his.

Never again need young adults feel that there is no way for their talents to find expression in the church. Doomed is the church which does not develop the strength and ability of its younger members by helping them to attack these vast undone tasks.

Where may individual Christians, groups, or local churches, realizing that God can work only through those who are under his reign, take hold of the burden? Where do they start? What can they do in their churches to help meet these needs? It is this common question which leads us now to examine the practical steps to be taken by members of the church, particularly young adults, in assuming their share in the world-wide mission of the Christian church.



# *CREATIVE CHURCHMANSHIP*



*When [the church's] corporate worship and the life of its members glow with the presence of God, the company becomes creative.*

—MADRAS REPORT

*Thy witness in the souls of men,  
Thy Spirit's ceaseless, brooding power,  
In lands where shadows hide the light,  
Await a new creative hour:  
O mighty God, set us aflame  
To show the glory of Thy Name.*

—FRANK MASON NORTH

## *Chapter III*

# CREATIVE CHURCHMANSHIP

## I

THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CREATIVITY IN THE AVERAGE church are unlimited. Given a growing appreciation of the essential place and function of the church, a normal imagination, and a well-balanced understanding of the practical problems involved in church work, any young church member can participate in creative churchmanship.

It is with the practical problems of church work we now deal—such matters as a working philosophy, divisions of church work, organization, areas of service, program planning, lay leadership, and securing members. Being creative involves more than wishing. Usually the greatest creativity is to be seen only after the long and strenuous, often seemingly hopeless, efforts of day-by-day work in the local church. When we are tempted to despair, we should be sustained by remembering the larger significance of what we do. We need to realize again that the place where the task of the world-wide church is centered is the local church or congregation. It is because of this fact

that the local church is the scene of the greatest possibilities of creativity: it is the sphere of action most directly accessible to those who are seeking experience and who want to make a positive contribution to the world mission of the church. And it is in the local church that young adults have their greatest opportunity to take their full share in every phase of the Christian enterprise. Years of work are often required before an individual is prepared to take a place of responsibility in the international agencies of the church, but this is not true of local responsibility. In the local church there is a place and a task for everyone. "The work to be done is so vast, so urgent and so important, that it calls for all the resources of all Christians in all parts of the world."<sup>1</sup>

Creative churchmanship implies, first, an adequate working philosophy of the scope, relation, and direction—the immediate and long-range function—of the Christian church. A working philosophy should translate the church's historic and world-wide mission into a comprehensive program for the local church, or perhaps even a smaller unit. It should integrate the areas of the church work into a dynamic whole.

A leader in a local church is only as effective as his philosophy is adequate. So many institutes and con-

<sup>1</sup> *Madras*, p. 31.

ferences are spent in giving those who attend innumerable suggestions and ideas: program helps, worship outlines, project lists, new teaching methods, new study material and literature. But all of these are useless unless the individual leader can select and integrate them on the basis of a clearly defined working philosophy. It is far more valuable to the church to have leaders with an adequate philosophy but without the latest materials and methods than to have leaders with all of the latest ideas and suggestions but without an understanding of why they are to be employed.

The four areas of the local church program which the creative leader must integrate are worship, education, service, and fellowship. Some people are convinced that education should come first and that the others will follow. Others are just as convinced that worship is the first and primary experience of the Christian and that it should be basic to all others. And there are many people who feel that the church is, first of all, a fellowship and that that fellowship is the basis for education and worship. Yet each of the four areas assumes its proper place and the dynamic of the Christian gospel can be comprehended only when the total work of the church is built around the mission of the church to serve. Jesus' call to the disciples was: "Come ye after me, and I will make you

fishers of men," and "Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and *doeth* them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock." The heart of the Christian enterprise is the pulsing, vital spirit of love revealed as the very nature of God, to be engendered in men if they will come under his reign. And love cannot live unless it is active. The church says a contemporary minister, is "the company of those who love bound together in the service of those who suffer." That is our purpose in the world. That is our call, our commission. And until it is the prime purpose and goal of the Christian, the Christian group, and the Christian church, the impelling vitality of the Christian movement is frustrated, the church will not be built on a rock.

The delegates at Madras were conscious of this center and goal of all worship and education. "If educated youth are to be drawn to the Church, they must see the teaching and worship of the Church finding expression in practical, unselfish service."<sup>2</sup> They further declared: "We recommend that an adequate program of work in the church be provided so as to challenge educated youth to active and sacrificial service."<sup>3</sup> Oxford said the same thing. "Christianity . . . insists that the only life in which human beings

<sup>2</sup> *Madras*, p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 102-3.

can find peace and happiness is that of service and self-sacrifice.”<sup>4</sup> So says Antoine de St. Exupery in *Flight to Arras*: “We must give before we can receive, and build before we can inhabit.”

— This is the secret of a dynamic and challenging Christianity. When we blunt the point of the challenge and misread the direction in which our goal lies, Christianity becomes a formalized, external thing, just as pre-Christian Judaism had become. The church must be providing outlets of service for its members, providing worship, education, and fellowship, all at the same time. But the heart of the church’s life and the soul of the church is to be found in its understanding of its high calling to serve.

When this organic interrelation of every phase of the church’s task is understood, then *education* takes its proper and essential place. Religious education prepares the individual Christian in order that his service may be both effective and truly Christian. Religious education comprises far more than just studying the Bible. The education for which the church must feel a direct responsibility, as noted at Madras and Oxford, is the education of men and women in the spirit which should be theirs as they undertake the tasks of service calling them and in the best possible ways of doing those tasks. Within the historic stream of the

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

Christian tradition is to be found invaluable guidance for those who now engage in the church's mission. That heritage and the experience of contemporaries are made ours through Christian education.

The integration of all phases of church work gives *worship* a new meaning. Instead of its being an act of piety, a rite required but meaningless, it becomes the supreme source of spiritual and mental inspiration and guidance, the fountain of the strength which sustains the Christian as he continues to labor at the tasks he is called to undertake; for all of those tasks are too big for him to bear alone. What spiritual solace is there for the man who gives his life for the ending of racial antagonism and hatred when he can see the acts of violence increasing, not diminishing? He can find such solace only when he comes close to God in worship, discovering again the eternal purposes of the God of the ages and receiving the assurance that he who labors with the Lord shall not be confounded. What solace is there for those who have been called to end the practice of war as a method of international adjustment? None, if they look only at the immediate developments upon the world's stage. But where can they see the workings of an infinite plan and feel the onward sweep of a spirit of love that is undaunted? That plan and that love they can see and feel in divine worship, and from worship they can

derive the spiritual strength to keep everlastingly at their high calling without losing their sense of direction.

Then *fellowship* becomes an organic part of the Church's life. Fellowship is primarily a by-product of the other three. Seldom does any number of meetings or teas develop true Christian fellowship; one job in which a group is mutually involved is far more effective. Fellowship, when sought for itself, is elusive. It abides only where men give it a home whose foundation is a spirit of mutual endeavor. The fellowship a Christian should seek grows from mutual worship, work, and study. Out of the pursuit of these other tasks that mark us as Christians rises that communion of spirit which abides without human presence, that transcends the barriers of race and nation and ocean and space and time. That is Christian fellowship, the same for a small group as for the worldwide church.

## II

The importance of a philosophy which makes service basic, building upon it education, worship, and fellowship, becomes clear when an attempt is made to help others take their places as workers in the church. The need of the church is not to discover some new and clever methods of drawing young adults into the



active program of the church in order to keep them. If the church would make its primary appeal to young adults—and to all others as well—upon the basis of the true nature and mission of the historic Christian church, as envisioned at Madras and Oxford, there could be no stronger appeal. This implies no denial of the extreme importance of the church's giving the Christian a philosophy of life adequate for understanding the world in which he has been placed. But it does declare that no adequate understanding of history is possible unless it is from the point of view of the Christian revelation which presupposes a dynamic in that history calling to the Christian to become a part of that dynamic. The young adults of today, particularly those who have been the product of a more-or-less progressive educational philosophy in America, are better prepared than their parents ever were to appreciate the dynamic of Christianity. They have been educated by the radio and magazine as well as in the classroom. They are as familiar as their parents with the ways of the politician and the complexity of international relations. They have been students in the vastly expanded social science departments of the modern school. Yet the real problems of the church are seldom put up to these young adults. They are not asked to use what knowledge they have, immediately, in attacking the vast problems which

threaten Christianity. Consequently, these young men and women are not made aware of the opportunities for work in their own communities or around the world. And what could be more stimulating than to challenge them with the largest of the problems? The jobs are waiting to be done. There are not enough people to do them all. There is need for more interest, more ability, more leadership, more creative insight, more money, more supplies, more ideas. Where are these to come from if not from the new acquisitions of the church, from the rising generation which has some of the energy and ability so desperately needed?

If the local church fails to make known to its members the needs of the church at large, it is untrue to its heritage. The greater tragedy occurs in the churches which stand in the way of their young people's sharing in the world Christian mission. One church lets its young adults give what they wish to community service projects but will not approve the group's sending money to projects beyond that community. Many churches so bias the presentation of the nation-wide and world-wide work of the church in their financial campaigns and publicity that they are in effect misrepresenting the historic Christian gospel. Others hold that social and economic questions are no concern of the church and stop any effort among

their young adults to study or serve areas of social need.

As a consequence, the only appeal to young adults in numerous churches is to take some sort of "leaf-raking" job—to help put out mailings, to sit on ineffectual committees, and to accept the *status quo*. And then the leaders wonder why the church is not growing. What worse appeal could be made? Where such a situation exists, the church is sinning against the god-given vitality and ability of the younger members of the church.

The same sin is committed by those churches whose appeal is to what the young adults "need." In many churches this is the whole approach. Every effort is made to find what the young adults feel they need, and then the young adult group is set to work to meet that need. "The young adult has a right to look to the Church to serve him in his hour of need."<sup>5</sup> If by this is meant the crises of life—birth, death, and the high moments of marriage and baptism—all could agree. But if this is meant to imply that the prime function of the young adult group is to concentrate on meeting whatever needs the young adults may have, it only encourages self-centeredness. How untrue this is to the Christian gospel which calls us, first, to serve others. The logical conclusion of this approach is that

<sup>5</sup> Charters, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

if all the young adults vote that they need *rumba* lessons, chemistry laboratories, and a golf course, a program for getting these things would be worked out by the young adult group of the church.

It is axiomatic that men usually do not know what they need most. Who is to decide? But we do know some of the things that need us. No greater service can be done for young adults—men and women who are at the edge of the abyss of self-centeredness as no other group in the church is—than to draw them out of themselves into the service of others. The church should not pacify them by offering them anything they want just to attract them to the church. It should challenge them by its desperate need of their talents and ability, not pamper them into selfish concentration on their own needs. The young people should be offered the exhilaration of feeling that they are needed. For one of the profound truths of the Christian gospel, one of the mysteries of the spiritual life, is that only in serving others, in meeting another's need, do we meet our own. Why has the church been so long in facing up to the most dynamic truth within its gospel and laying upon the consciences of men the world-shaking fact that no man shall satisfy his own needs, his own deeper hungers, until in the spirit of the Christ he dedicates his life and talents to the service of those who need him?

## III

An adequate working philosophy for creative churchmanship must go beyond challenging young adults to working out the specific areas and tasks of service to which it will call those young adults. And the test of creativity is the strategy employed in selecting the most important jobs and doing them first and in the selecting the right person for the right job. This is not a simple matter, for even in the smallest church there are so many tasks waiting to be done at all times that the choice of the most essential is often difficult.

There are three areas of Christian service: Christians are called to serve within the church, within the community, and beyond the horizon. And each Christian should be at work in all three areas at the same time. There is no foundation for the idea that these are three progressive steps on the ladder of Christian service. The Christian is called, as soon as he feels the pull of the gospel, to serve all men—and distance is no excuse for laxity. In fact, if he were to place his major interest and service where there is the most need, it would be beyond the horizon. There are far more needs there than a person can ever meet in his own personal experience.

Service *within the church* runs the entire gamut of the institutional program—committee membership,

teaching in the church school, helping with special meetings and programs, leading study groups, evangelism, missionary promotion, singing in the choir, and ushering. It might even consist in making a list of jobs to be done and having the list available to those who want to work. It might be starting a religious drama group; or working out some system of contacting newcomers to the town or community; or making equipment for the church school; or working out a display of maps, pictures, charts, or posters throughout the church as a continuous visual-education project. Service within the church could call a committee to educate the church on the development of the ecumenical movement, or even to build greater international understanding through a study class of some foreign language, such as Spanish.

Service through the church *in the community* includes every kind of civic betterment. Those men who have thought of community service as competing with the church have failed to see that this is one of the avenues for fulfilling the gospel demand for service. In many communities the church has no idea of the needs of the town in the fields of adequate recreation, better housing, better civic government, adequate incomes, improved working conditions, public safety, provision for the handicapped, or community planning. Yet every one of these should be the

concern of the church that is called to serve the poor and the needy and to save those in need from suffering and pain. The first project requirement may be to make a thorough sociological and religious survey of the community to discover the areas of greatest need. This might lead to setting up day nurseries for working mothers or to sending underprivileged children to a summer camp. Good could come from a refugee hostel, or some other demonstration project in interracial or interfaith fellowship. Perhaps the town needs a civil liberties committee or a group to study the bases of a just and lasting peace. Many communities in this country still have no week-day religious instruction for the children, and in just as many communities there is need for continuous pressure to stop discrimination against Negroes, Jews, and Japanese in industry, the army, the professions, and in residential quarters. Signal service might be performed if the church would form a committee for promoting the church in the community, interpreting what the church's function truly is to those who otherwise would not know. There is always need for getting volunteers to work in community service agencies, such as hospitals, clinics, and schools. Perhaps the community has great need of a good library. All of these needs should be met in the community by the

positive spirit of service engendered by the Christian church. All of them are the church's work.

Service *beyond the horizon* is more limited in possibilities than that in the other two areas. It is impossible for each of us to go to India or China or Africa to do the work we feel should be done. We have to work together with many others so that someone else may go for us. But that does not lessen our responsibility. It increases it. Imagination is demanded if we are to see beyond the immediate and feel ourselves a part of the world-wide church that has a mission for men in every land, wherever human life is in need. We fulfill our part in that vast enterprise when we give of our means that others may take our place and then do all in our power to keep up with the changing problems on the world front. Mission study should not be built primarily on the effort to get people interested in missions and to convert new supporters. The church should presuppose that every one of its members is responsible for supporting missions. Mission study should be primarily to keep those who study up-to-date on the developments of an enterprise in which they are already at work. The mission representatives have a right to expect of their supporters an intelligent and informed interest so that they will know the problems faced on the field and the direction in which the mission work should be



moving. Thus the missionary and the supporter may share that true fellowship which grows from working in a common endeavor.

Important as is the study of the church's world mission, study is not the only way of serving beyond the horizon. Groups and churches can work independently or together in supporting a national missionary, building a church or clinic, supplying books or technical equipment for a hospital or laboratory abroad. They can maintain correspondence with missionaries and meet and entertain those who have returned. They should continue to encourage young men and women to prepare to become missionaries. They could sponsor visits and help to home mission centers in this land. They might take action to get proportional representation of young adults on the general boards and committees of the church. They could study the recommendations of the conference committees on social and national issues and see that action is taken. There is much work to do "beyond the horizon."

In these three areas, then, the Christian has both an individual and a collective responsibility. The church, too, can save its life only by losing it in service of those in need, whoever they are or wherever they may be. And this should be the perennial theme of every group in the church: "to do the church's

work." This goal is not limiting. It forces a group into more types of service than does any other demand. If we are to be true to the Christian church and serve it best, we must stop thinking that the demands upon an individual Christian and those upon a church are different. Doing the church's work comprehends every call of conscience and conviction to which the Christian can ever respond.

#### IV

Along with a clear understanding of the areas of service which wait for the Christian wherever he is, an adequate working philosophy of creative churchmanship should provide a point of view to enable the church member not only to do the church's work but also to maintain his supreme loyalty to the total church. One of the easiest traps into which young people's groups fall—as do women's and men's groups—is that of developing loyalty to the group rather than to the church itself. It is so easy to see the past sins and weaknesses of the Christian church and to turn away feeling that in small-group activity one may come closer to the demands of Christianity. There is a definite place for the small group, but it is still necessary to guard against the danger of thinking that any Christian life can have its fullest meaning when it is separated from the body of

Christ in which the onward stream of the gospel for the world is to be found. This is not to condone everything the church has done. But when the church's history is read without bias, the continuous process of re-created activity which has marked that history becomes clear. Correcting the evils of the church has always been the task of those within, not outside, the church. No greater historical proof of the divinity of the institution is needed than that God has seen fit to make the church the instrument of his continued revelation. The crust of compromise and complacency has been broken and broken again by the upsurging of new life within the church. For, though it is only a human institution, the church has carried the seed of the renewing life of the gospel. It is the universal agency of God's hand. In its membership is to be found a fellowship that is truly world-wide. Through its revolutionary sense of mission it is, far more than most men realize, fulfilling the gospel demands.

A large measure of the weakness of the church can be traced to the disillusionment of men and women who either were reared to expect a perfect institution and found the church far from perfect, or were converted to Christianity expecting great demands upon them—demands that were never made. When the failures of the church are stressed without a com-

mensurate willingness to attempt correction of those faults, complaints only augment the failure. Great as are its shortcomings at any particular spot, all Christians should be uplifted when they feel the pulse of the dynamic life of the church-around-the-world. If any local church does not pulse with that dynamic, it is the fault of members who are ignorant of the great historic enterprise they share.

One importance of maintaining primary loyalty to the total church lies in the fact that all men and women grow old. How many times the feeling of loyalty to a young people's class or organization has continued for fifty years—a pathetic loyalty, resulting in hardship for the young people who should be developing broader leadership.

The same thing can happen to a young adult group. When once formed with members that enjoy each other's fellowship, they may go on for years claiming to be the "young adult group" of the church. The only adequate way to overcome such fixation is to draw those group members into the larger and more inclusive fellowship of the total church, making them face its major problems; for in the church there is a place for everyone to express an ongoing concern as long as life lasts.

The church, then, is the source of Christianity for each church member. It is the spiritual mother of the

faithful. From her life men receive life, and to her they owe allegiance—not the blind allegiance of pure formalism or the stultifying limitations which go with the idealizing of conformity, but the allegiance which calls us to be worthy sons and daughters, creative, full of life and energy, children who feel their responsibility to the future more than to the past and are determined to strengthen and purify the church of our fathers so there will be a church for our sons.

## V

The church is not a single organization; it is made up of a number of organizational levels, each with a particular function. These levels include the international, the national, the regional, the district, the community, the group, the “cell,” and the individual. There is a function for each of these. World missions require an international organization, as does interdenominational co-operation on the various mission fields. Nation-wide church organizations have their place, each denomination making its distinctive contribution to the country’s life. For meeting the differing problems of various regions within the nation there are smaller organizational units covering a state or two or a part of a state—conferences, areas, synods, or such. A fourth level is that of the locality, the city or county or area of similar size, where a

small number of churches co-operate for mutual aid, sharing programs and activities—the district, presbytery, or such. In every community it is necessary to have the fifth organizational level, the local congregation, whose function is to provide a church building for worship and the leadership for the church's activities. Within this congregation are the three other levels: the group, the cell, and the individual. Basic to creative churchmanship is an understanding of the place of each level.

Some of the gravest errors in the life of the church have been made by assigning to one level the work that should rightly be done on another. The church now realizes that denominational organization can be efficient on a world scale only when it shares in interdenominational co-operation. Therefore, the church is now making every effort to erase the tragic errors committed on those mission fields where new converts were drawn into a denominational loyalty which led to conflicts, all on the basis of theological and historical distinctions which were entirely meaningless to the new convert.

Similarly, in the local church mistakes are frequently made by expecting a group to do what the total church should attack, or by assigning to a group a simple job that one person could easily carry out. Many dead committees are the outgrowth of meetings

at which no important items of business were presented, the time being spent on arguing over minor points which the chairman could easily have decided with justice to all. Many disillusioned groups are the result of their being assigned jobs so extensive that they should have been assumed by all of the churches of a community working co-operatively.

When facing a new task, then, the creative leader should decide first of all on which organizational level that task should be done. This is both good strategy and wise administration.

The church's work must be carried on on each level—one level is no more important than the others. To know how the church operates, a leader should become familiar with the significance and the unique tasks of each.

There are people, to be sure, who believe that the church's problems can be solved by reorganization at the top. Others see the hope of the church in the devoted activity of cells. There are people who deny the importance of any organization, who contend that the complicated structure of the contemporary church frustrates Christianity. They would measure the church's work by its proficiency in personal counseling or its statements of conviction on social issues. Then there are people who worship organization, not consciously perhaps, but who measure the effective-

ness of the church by its rivers of converts and its thousands of groups organized, institutes held, and pamphlets distributed. And, of course, there are the people who worship form and structure, who feel that the church has fulfilled its obligation to its young people by organizing a youth fellowship, or to its women when a woman's society is set up.

Creative churchmanship should keep the leader from either despair or too great optimism. Organizational structure is tested by the efficiency with which it performs its assigned task. There is nothing divine or fixed about any church organizational structure. Yet how often a group, after laboring lovingly over a new constitution, serves that constitution forever. The intelligent Christian views the structure of church organization as merely the machinery by which a job is to be done. When and if the job is completed, there is no more need of the machinery. Or when different circumstances arise, that machinery can be altered or modified. The conferees at Madras and Oxford did not try to specify the organizational structure of the church around the world. That would be confusing the methods with the end.

## VI

It is not possible for young adults to find outlets for their talent and ability at once on every level of church



organization, but there are five of the levels on which they can work, and each of these levels should be examined with care: the individual, the cell, the group, the congregation, and the district.

Many church members fail to realize their obligation to be doing the work of the church even though they work alone. The church has many who, obviously, assume their individual obligations. There are men and women who, single-handed, have helped families in the community, have worked in the church and among its members, and have been examples to all who knew them of true Christian charity. It should not be our role merely to extol others for their individual generosity. We should be like them. If there are calls for Christian service which we alone see, we should answer those calls. If we know of needs in our community and cannot arouse others to help us meet them, we still should go ahead alone, doing as much as we can. If we live among strangers but hear the call of need, we should answer. The Christian is an organization of one, and the church's work depends on such individuals who "organize" themselves for action and service. We might help the minister in his calling on the sick, read to the blind, distribute devotional material among our neighbors, or volunteer for work in a community agency. Though many people are doing these things, the church still lags behind in

using its latent ability. Having a group is not enough to turn all talent loose. There are those to whom a group does not appeal, and those within groups who still are not used. In these instances the church should be ready to challenge its members individually.

How should that challenge be presented? Some people like the emotional appeal of dramatic jobs beckoning, but seldom is this high emotional level sustained. Wise churchmanship should recognize the church's right to expect the stewardship of *time* from each member. Every church member is obliged to earn his daily bread in the world of business and industry, on the farm, or in the office. Many of these jobs have such minor Christian significance that we could hardly call them "doing the will of God." Some of them imply a denial of the Christian understanding of brotherhood, and some jobs so bind the worker to a monotonous routine of mechanical movement that there is no possibility of creativity in employment.

Wherever possible, "Christians are under constraint to carry their faith and loyalty into concrete situations, the daily business and the personal relationships of their life."<sup>6</sup> Thus a sense of Christian vocation should be developed. Yet the church can provide many channels of creative service over and above the occu-

<sup>6</sup> *Oxford*, p. 52.

pational opportunities. Each Christian should be under constraint to assume a *Christian avocation*. In and through the church all talents and ability should be called to constant service. A Christian avocation would imply the regular giving of time and talent. A Christian avocation should imply a genuine effort to prepare for the tasks to be done. A Christian avocation could challenge every worker to balance the monotony, the meaninglessness, of many occupations with the eternal meaning and significance and opportunities for creative endeavor found in tasks of service.

Many of the opportunities for individual endeavor involved lay leadership in the church. Perhaps the most urgent need of most local churches today is laymen who not only have talent and zeal but who are also willing to prepare themselves for the well-rounded leadership in the church which too often the minister alone can provide.

Lay leadership in its larger sense should not mean just the doing of one specific job in the church. The man who is a church school superintendent for many years is fulfilling his responsibility only when he becomes intimately familiar with every other phase of the church's work and thus is able, of himself, to integrate his particular responsibility into the total program. Even more it should be expected of those men

who serve only on finance committees and as trustees that they become acquainted with the real work of the church which the finances are supporting—service projects, worship, education, and projects for fellowship. There is continuous change and growth in each of these fields—new educational methods, new concepts and areas of service, new material and ideas for worship, new opportunities for fellowship. The most valuable lay leader is the man who strives to grow with the church, who sees the interrelation of all its parts and can fit his own job into the whole.

To become such a lay leader a man needs to study continually, to read formative books, and to keep abreast of contemporary religious literature. It is impossible for every church member to take theological training, yet the local church that gives its members most of the essentials of a seminary course is the church that will have prepared its laymen for competent leadership, both in the church and in the community. Zeal must be balanced with knowledge. As was pointed out in the Madras report, "A Christian incentive to combat social sin requires two elements in inseparable unity: (1) ethical sensitiveness and (2) knowledge of social fact. Sensitiveness without knowledge leads to sentimentality; knowledge without sensitiveness leads to shallow humanism which

lacks moral incentive.”<sup>7</sup> The church has every right to require of its members who seek to serve knowledge of the task to be done and proper procedure for doing it.

Such training and experience should be easier in a small church or community than in a large one. But no church should ever be satisfied with developing one man who is prepared for creative leadership. The ongoing life of the church calls for many leaders in every church on whose shoulders the real work of the church can be laid. It is through the development of many leaders that the church can combat the temptation to become organized on a business basis. Many men who project their business background into their church work believe that efficiency in the church demands that the minister be the head executive and have authority to make all decisions. Or, lacking respect for the minister, they may select the chairman of the board of trustees or some other influential layman to “rule” the church. But there is no “boss” in a Protestant church. No minister, no chairman of the trustees, no deacon, or lay leader is the authority of the church. Every man is called to serve God as God’s will is revealed to him. Every Christian is called to fill a dual responsibility—being an individual Christian and a church member. The authority of the church lies in

<sup>7</sup> P. 108.

the collective will, a collective will that is always informed and revitalized by individual creativity and insight. Thus every man and woman in the church is called to be a leader. For the church is made up of what John Steinbeck calls "free people": "They think that just because they have only one leader and one head, we are all like that. They know that ten heads lopped off will destroy them, but we are a free people; we have as many heads as we have people, and in a time of need leaders pop up among us like mushrooms." <sup>8</sup>

## VII

There are great unexplored possibilities for work in the church and community on the second level, that of "cells." The importance of cells is rapidly increasing in the church. By "cell" we mean a few men and women, maybe three, maybe a dozen, *who consciously unite* to do a specific job. Think of the cells that have set the world on fire. The disciples were but twelve against the world. John Wesley and his "Methodists" were a cell from which a mighty religious awakening grew. Three students seeking shelter from a storm held a prayer meeting beside a haystack near Williamstown, in 1806, and resolved to form a society "to effect in the person of its members

<sup>8</sup> *The Moon Is Down*, Viking Press, 1942, p. 175.

a mission to the heathen." From this haystack meeting grew the foreign mission enterprise of the American Christian church. These were all cells.

No one expects each cell formed to turn the world upside down. Nothing so dramatic is sought. But the church should consciously encourage and plan the formation of cells within it to do the parts of the church's work which larger units may not do. This is a level of organization which has not been sufficiently explored by local churches as a channel for young adult ability and talent.

The formation of cells raises problems for the minister as well as for the layman. Many ministers feel that they are already so burdened with the regular activities of the church that they have no time for extras. Yet the tapping of resources of energy and talent within the church by turning small cells loose to do the innumerable tasks of the church is certainly not an extra. It deserves a place of equal organizational rank with the ladies' society or the men's club. Often it can save a minister's time, for he can work with a cell rather than with each person individually. Madras commends this type of organization: "The Church should encourage and promote small groups within the fellowship organized for specific types of social action."<sup>9</sup> Oxford feels that such small groups are

<sup>9</sup> *Madras*, p. 111.

eminently worth while: "because some things cannot be changed without State action or international adjustment, the effective power of 'two or three' men of conviction, who make themselves into a Christian 'cell' must not be underestimated. In fact, the world over, there are such groups, who in the spirit of him who walked the second mile are proving what can be done to bridge unbridgeable gulfs and to bring back into society those who have felt themselves to be outcasts and unwanted." <sup>10</sup>

It is not possible for large groups to experience the intimate personal fellowship of common interest and endeavor that a cell can provide. A young married couples' group may bring together congenial men and women in monthly meetings, but usually it is very difficult to get an entire group committed to more than one project of service at a time. Yet within that young married couples' group there may be three couples extremely interested in the church school, four others anxious to help start a day nursery in the community, three who would conduct boys' and girls' clubs, and the rest deeply concerned about the church in Latin America. And the club's funds might be divided among the projects. Could anyone consider the uniting of these couples into as many cells and the starting of each on its own path as an

<sup>10</sup> *Oxford*, pp. 52-53.



“extra”? We fail the church if such cells are not started, for at many jobs the cell is far more effective than the individual or the larger group.

To some laymen the formation of cells seems a divisive step. The formation of cells is divisive only when the concept of the church's task is limited to a set number of formal and traditional activities, such as the worship service on Sunday morning, the church school, and a midweek meeting. However, as we have seen, the church's work includes far more. All of the tasks mentioned above should grow automatically from the traditional and unique services of the church. Yet it is impossible for the church as a whole to work at all points at the same time. It is even impossible for a men's club to be active in every theater of Christian service in the community at once. To do the job, the church must call upon smaller units of devoted men and women to work at the tasks which interest them and for which they are best prepared. This, then, does not divide the church. It unites it more deeply in spirit, for each knows that the others, too, are working in various areas to build a better church, a better community. All church members then share the church's dynamic.

What is the alternative? If any should contend that the church should do only those things that it can do as a unit, the foundation would be laid for unfor-

givable complacency. It is possible for a church of four hundred members to spend all of its meetings during the year developing fellowship among those members. In such a church a youth group or men's club could be called divisive.

Many kinds of cells have been formed in the church, some formalized by established disciplines, others not so. The Conference on Disciplined Life and Service, made up of young adults of different denominations who meet annually to exchange ideas and experiences, has been particularly concerned about the formation of fellowship groups, a type of cell. In its description of such a group physical, economic, social, study, and action disciplines are presented in great detail. These disciplines are outgrowths of the objective: "A fellowship group is composed of persons who are committed to a way of life and submit themselves to common disciplines in order to follow that way."<sup>11</sup> Another form of the cell is the Ashram, which may become a larger group, and which extends the principle of fellowship to a full-time residential basis, with disciplines controlling manners of dress, use of time and money, and devotional life.

The strength of such elaborately designed cells is that they recognize that the Christian fellowship is

<sup>11</sup> *Newsletter of Friends of the Christian Fellowship*, Vol. I, No. 5, Appendixes II, IV.

more profound than mere acquaintance or association, that no one organized form ever exploits all the values in that fellowship, and that because the church's task is no easy and simple one, supreme devotion and rigid discipline (self-imposed) is essential to doing God's will on earth. Such cells are not without certain dangers, however. They are as tempted as the church to hold the form of their fellowship as of more importance than the purpose of that fellowship. Often their beginning has been in a conviction of the weakness of the church because of its many organizations, but they have ended in being more complicated structurally than the church from which they came.

The history of medieval monasticism is, in a measure, being repeated in our day. The monastic movement, growing out of a desire for a more exacting and disciplined Christian experience than the Church provided, was a reaction against the laxity and corruption of the church. But the pattern of the development in each of the monastic orders eventually became as lax and often as corrupt as the church.

Even greater is the danger of pride and exclusiveness in such cells—the almost inevitable by-product of feeling that membership in this cell more fully meets the demands of the Christian gospel. If such pride develops, it tends to sever the relation between the cell and the church. The cell lives for itself or its own

ideals instead of feeding into the ongoing life of the church which gave it life.

It is not necessary to form such elaborate structures to have a cell. The cell is not, in itself, divine. It remains a mechanism, one of many within the larger fellowship of the church, by which the church may organize for the task to be done. A far more practical form of the cell is the committee, a group of devoted men and women brought together to do a specific task. A class may become a cell. An occupational group may be drawn together by very strong mutual interest and make a Christian impact upon the area of that occupation or profession. A neighborhood group is often most practical where transportation is a major problem. In a rural community the farmers living near each other may constitute a vital cell in the church's life. Often natural groupings of close friends can be made to see themselves as a potential cell.

The cell may be made up of those who are the same age or of very different ages. A young adult group may be subdivided into cells, or its cells may overlap and include others not in that group. Essential always is the *conscious drawing together* of a small group in common endeavor. It is not necessary that all members believe alike; it is important that they agree on the particular job at hand. When the job is completed, the cell may be disbanded and each member

may join another cell. For the cell derives its life from the life stream of the church and has meaning only as it contributes to that ongoing stream. The cell is never an end in itself. Membership in the cell is only one way of making membership in the church more meaningful. If a cell becomes permanent, it will, more than likely, be a detriment rather than a help to the church.

Meetings of a cell may be as frequent as the task requires. It is helpful to have the meetings include a devotional period, for every Christian needs to face particular decisions with a consciousness of their larger significance. But the program of the cell should be designed to meet the problem the cell faces. Similarly, the officers or leaders of the cell can be chosen as needs arise.

There are certain jobs in the church which cells may perform better than other levels of organization. Within the church, such jobs could be developing the adult education of the church through encouraging the regular reading of the best religious periodicals, forming a churchmen's group to study the various agencies of the church and how they operate, providing a Sunday morning literature table for the distribution of books and periodicals, and publishing a monthly parish paper for the church. Within the community, such jobs might include organizing recre-

ational facilities for the underprivileged, helping poor families rebuild their homes, renovating furniture and gardens, establishing a "store-front" reading room featuring good religious books and magazines for those who do not come to church. Beyond the horizon, jobs especially suited to cells are writing letters to missionaries on the field or to students in foreign schools, providing religious services in hospitals and jails, organizing and conducting out-point church schools, and making sociological and religious surveys of the community. And this is just the beginning.

## VIII

The third level upon which young adults may be challenged to do the church's essential task in the world is that of the group. It is not necessary to deal exhaustively with this type of organization, because most young people in the church are familiar with its various forms. Most churches are already well supplied with groups.

However, there are certain perennial problems that groups face, particularly young adult groups. These are problems touching the purpose, the relation of social fellowship to projects of service, the composition of the constitution, and the program planning.

If an adequate working philosophy which comprehends the place of group organization has been worked

out, why should there be these problems? A group does not exist in a church because of some right—it should be there for a purpose. If it is an age group, it should be doing the work of the church among those of that age in the church. If it is an occupational group—say, young business women—the purpose of the group is to do the work of the church among that group. If it is a men's group, its function is to do the church's work among the men of the church.

Thus the cabinet of a group is, in a real sense, part of the staff of the church, and any group program should grow out of the joint planning of the minister and the group officers. The church as a whole may provide adequate opportunity for worship for every one of its members; but seldom is the minister able to plan and conduct all the outlets for service and education, or to provide all the fellowship for every church member. It is the function of the group to do the part of this job which the total church cannot complete. And it should be impressed upon the officers of a group when they assume office that their task is to do the total work of the church among the members or prospective members of that group.

The young adult group in a local church may be a young men's group, a young women's group, a young married couples' group, or a mixed group. Where the group is for men or women only, organization is

usually a comparatively easy matter. This type of group is most common in urban centers where a church is large enough for more than one group. In such churches some sort of council is imperative, preferably made up of the officers of both or all groups. The council should co-ordinate plans, initiate changes of program, and be primarily concerned with reaching every young adult in the membership and fitting the activities of the various groups to serve all of these young adults.

The mixed group of single and married young adults tests severely the cohesive power of Christian fellowship. In many ways married and single young adults have very different interests. Often the age ranges are not balanced. If the women take too strong a hand in leadership, the men may feel that it is really a women's group and either just watch or quit altogether. Yet these difficulties must be faced, for in the average small church such a group is the most practical to try to promote, particularly where military demands have greatly reduced the number of young men in the community.

This is the schoolroom, in a sense, of the total church; and if these difficulties cannot be overcome, the work of the total church eventually suffers. Still there are advantages that must be recognized in a mixed young adult group. It is easier for single men



and women to share a worth-while program when young couples take part: there is less tendency to consider the group's sole purpose that of matchmaking. Cliques are more easily broken, and a sincere desire to include every young adult of the church in the group's program is more easily developed. A unified approach is automatic.

Perhaps the most significant type of young adult group at the present time is the young married couples' group. Young married couples usually are settled in the community. The coming of children can often bind them very securely to the church. They are drawn to become as concerned for the future as for the past. It is often easier to develop a normal concern for community welfare. But at the same time this group is usually least interested in service projects that do not relate to their own homes. In nearly every church this results in an overemphasis upon the social time together and a gradual denial of the church's central function. Many group leaders fail to realize that social fellowship comes as automatically as the seasons.

The prime value of young married couples' groups is the fact that men and women are working together. Why should only the women of the church know about the church school, missions, social service, and dozens of other things usually left to them? Why

should not the men be as concerned for the program of the church as they are for its finances? It should be a goal of every church progressively to end the traditional division of men and women in church group activities. The church is one institution in which these sexes can and should be equal in a truly important community activity.

The city church often has more opportunity than the small-town church to serve young married couples by giving them interesting and creative activities in which both husband and wife may participate. Where both are holding jobs which draw them into separate circles of acquaintanceship and interest, the preservation of the home depends upon the development of mutual interests and endeavors. This development the church is uniquely able to provide.

It may be that the women have more time to attend meetings than have the men, but their meetings could be supplementary to the principal groups in which husbands and wives meet together.

Groups of young married couples have started a most beneficial trend in the church. Wherever they provide that each office in the group shall be held by a couple, they are establishing a healthy precedent. This principle should not be dropped when the couples are no longer young adults. It should be continued in group organization. And it could be con-

tinued in other phases of the church's work. Husband and wife can be appointed together to any church committee. Such an appointment not only gives them a common interest but enables them to be together instead of separated on the evening of meetings.

Madras urged more joint work by men and women. "We are of opinion that every phase of evangelistic work should be shared by both *men and women*, and that there should be equal opportunity of service for both men and women in this as in every department of the churches' activities."<sup>12</sup> Married couples' organizations may have their greatest possibilities among young adults, but there is no reason for considering them exclusively for that department of the church.

As there are certain tasks best performed by individuals or cells, so there are certain other tasks in the church and in the community which are best done by groups. In the church, such tasks include planning and carrying out monthly church nights for all members and groups of the church, conducting a campaign of evangelism among certain age-groups, getting young mothers together to discuss child training, and developing religious-book lending libraries in the church. In the community, such tasks include establishing a co-operative (credit union or grocery store), studying labor and racial disputes and

<sup>12</sup> *Madras*, p. 38.

publishing findings, establishing a town forum, and having Saturday movies for children if those offered by commercial houses are of low quality. Beyond the horizon, such group tasks might include supporting native workers on foreign fields, supporting exchange students from abroad, helping girls get their nurses' training, preparing to help in postwar reconstruction by studying and building up funds, and sending delegates to interdenominational conferences to help the ecumenical movement.

No effort is made here to suggest *the* way young adult groups should be organized, *the* program they should institute. This is the point at which every single leader is given the opportunity of creative leadership. For there is no one way—there are many ways, one better today, another better tomorrow. Denominational board offices and the International Council of Religious Education publish very valuable literature with specific ideas and suggestions. Where practicable it is well to follow denominational patterns.

## IX

The need for ability and energy is always present on the fourth level, that of the congregational organization. Here the talents of young adults can always be used. As rapidly as they are interested and able to do the work of church committees, they should be

placed on the regular committees of the church. A wise policy is proportional representation of all ages in the church, which not only gives all natural groupings in the church a share in its decisions but also develops a constant supply of new leaders already familiar with the problems of the local church. Young adults should serve on the official board, in the session or council. They should be at work in the mission and education committees, on the committee welcoming new members, as canvassers, ushers, church school teachers, stewards, and trustees. Young adults should help form groups to study the basis of a just and durable peace. They should help to educate the church on true stewardship and away from its dependence on fairs and bazaars. Young adults should help draw the church as a whole into active work for civic betterment. These tasks all call for talent.

The fifth level on which young adults can take an active share in the church's work and find innumerable demands upon their ability and energy is in the church's organization in the district or larger area. Considerable experience in this level is necessary before men or women are ready to help on the higher levels. The work of a small locality is important in providing more opportunity for interdenominational fellowship, for sharing ideas and experiences, and for meeting problems too large for a single group or

church. This is not meant to refer to the district organizations of young adults, but rather to the district organization of the total church. It should be the concern of every minister and district officer (presiding elder or superintendent, presbyter or bishop) to employ the latent talent of the church in meeting the problems of the locality. These may be racial antagonism, conflicts between workers and employers, sudden migration to or from the locality, the coming of new industries, health problems arising from community needs, the need of more churches or church schools, or the need of uniting churches in a declining community. The young adults can help work on this level and at the same time serve a period of apprenticeship for the larger jobs that lie ahead. This should threaten no one's position. It is ever more important to build for the future than merely to control the present.

## X

No matter how many lists are compiled or suggestions made, the multiform tasks of the church will be just so many separate and unrelated strands unless the individual or group faces its task creatively. There is tremendous opportunity for creativity in every church and group—the smaller the group the more creative it can be. Simply starting numerous new

projects without careful study of the conditions of the church and community and the point of greatest need is utter folly. If, however, one sees the possibilities of work which will demand his utmost ability and devotion if the church is to remain vital, the church's work becomes a constant inspiration, endlessly exciting and continually gratifying.

Above all, the leader must resist the temptation which accompanies most work with a traditional institution—the temptation continually to narrow the area of responsibility, seeking perfection within that area. No one can do any church job perfectly. If perfection in a single job is the goal, one will never attack all the others waiting to be done.

The source of creativity is threefold. It grows from a common agreement that the church is not perfect, that there is room for improvement; from a recognition that formal rite or organization is only a means, never an end—that both must be constantly informed by a spiritual vitality to justify their use; and from a clear perception of the difficult problems and undone tasks that lie ahead.

The problem of creativity is how the witness of the Christian church is to be effected. No one can tell another what the form will be. Yet every means of expressing it is a concern of the church and should elicit the church's support. Wherever men are in

need, there is the automatic call. And man's individual and collective needs are so varied and vast that there is no end to the possibilities for service. The chapters of service have not all been written in history's book. Tomorrow's newspaper, next month's magazine, will give the dramatic accounts of new types of service someone has performed for another. Notice the variety and originality someone displayed. That should be the pattern for each church member.

The multiple and varied demands of the war upon people's willingness to serve have amply illustrated the possibilities of endless creativity in forms of service. Projects are being started and more will follow—projects to serve prisoners of war in camps in this country and abroad; to provide spiritual and social assistance to service men in camp and on leave; to start recreational activities in horribly overcrowded defense areas; to establish new churches in mushrooming defense towns; to support overseas relief and rehabilitation; to care for the children of working mothers in day nurseries; to help refugees adjust to a new and strange land; to help serve the Japanese in concentration camps in this country; to prepare for helping the war disabled find their way back to social usefulness; to meet the health problems arising from the drafting of doctors. This just begins the list.

One principle should always guide—to do the un-



done jobs. If someone is already surveying the community to see what additional recreational facilities are needed, try not to duplicate. The same principle should guide state-wide or conference-wide organization as well as that of the local church. Dr. Brown points out that it is also valid on the world-wide basis. "In order to secure this support [of the co-operating communions] we shall do well to forget for the moment the question of organizational relationships (a fertile field of misunderstanding and dispute) and to begin with the consideration of those unfinished tasks which all agree are the rightful responsibility of the Church but which we equally agree are not now being adequately discharged. It is at this point that our need of unity will become most apparent."<sup>13</sup>

Creativity is always possible and there is no need for duplicating any job done by others. The goal of creativity would prompt the conference organization to encourage every local group to be different. What good reason can be given for trying to get every church to organize identically or to have exactly the same project? If the goal is a feeling of common endeavor, then uniformity is only a superficial virtue. Young adults over a whole state no less than those in a local congregation will have a power-

<sup>13</sup> *World Conference on Faith and Order*, Report No. 5, Harper & Bros., 1937, p. 25.

ful sense of common endeavor if they know that each is trying to express a common spirit in his own community to meet the peculiar needs of that community. Then when they come together in annual institutes, how interesting will be their discussions—not blueprints handed to them and then checked on to see if they toe the line in regimented fashion, but the sharing of a multitude of ideas, all unique, the demonstration of true vitality in meeting the complex problems of modern community life.

For here is one of the essential needs of contemporary Christianity—that the growing unity of organization and uniformity of worship shall not reflect in an increasing uniformity of action, but rather that it should definitely encourage the expanded creativity in the small units of the world-wide church. Never should the aggressive expansion of types of Christian service be thought of as competing with the regular program. The regular program should be the home base from which the “guerrilla forces” of Christianity are constantly advancing into the world on every kind of Christian mission. The forward movement of Christianity through the centuries has not been one concerted, unified, and completely planned campaign, but the result of innumerable “local actions” stemming from a common incentive and spirit and looking toward a common goal—the kingdom of God.

There is, today, a heightened imperative for increased creative lay leadership. With the expansion of anti-Christian policies in many nations the obvious point of attack is the professional leadership of the church. Clergymen are carried off to concentration camps or are sent to the front lines in the army. And if they constituted the church, the church would cease to exist in those communities. Thank God this has not been true! There have been men and women, thoroughly familiar with every phase of the church's life, who have carried on through all opposition. Such men and women will continue to carry on. This is the test of the creativity of the lay leadership of a church—what will happen to the church if its minister is taken away?

But there is a second imperative. What is the church to do when war is over and the young adults who have been in the armed forces return to the extremely difficult adjustments of civilian life? Will the present young adults of the church be ready to give positive and able leadership to their fellows? The returning soldiers and sailors may not be much inclined to listen to their elders, for it was their elders who constituted the religious and political leadership before the war. They did not prevent the sacrifice and suffering. If anyone can channel the ability and energy of the returning young men and women, it will have to be

other young men and women their own age, their former schoolmates and business companions.

And how can the church prove that it has been doing its job, too, in the interim, and that it has a place for them to share in the continuous job, unless it points to every undone task and lays the peacetime needs of the world upon the consciences of the country's returning defenders? Again it must be said that there is a place for everyone. It must be pointed out again and again that the jobs to be done are as varied as the interests and personalities of men and women. The talents of every Christian can be used to the full and still there will be jobs to do. Only this challenge will hold the interest of returning soldiers. May God preserve the church from failing them by merely asking them to come back to services, to be loyal and patient followers of someone else! If that is all they are offered, the church may be destroyed by the vitality that *must* find expression—constructively or destructively.

## XI

There is yet another question to be asked—the final test of a working philosophy. How are young adults outside the church to be interested in the Christian church? Some say it is all right to talk of turning latent power of young adults to work, but how are

they to be brought to the church where they can hear about the jobs to be done?

Obviously, there is no one answer. Evangelism may be effected through many channels, and often people never know what it was that first induced them to come to church. However, there is one type of evangelism with great potentialities that is virtually unexplored—what might be called evangelism by way of missions. Those who think that missions is a dull subject know little about missions; they do not see the drama or the significance of a world-wide program of service by which the church is attempting to take seriously the injunction to lose its life for Christ's sake that it might be saved. See the extensive agencies of service in every continent: schools where there were none before; colleges where higher education was unheard of; medical schools to train a nation's first doctors; translators giving whole peoples their first written language and literature; agricultural stations rebuilding poverty-ridden rural communities; seminaries training local young men to be their country's first native religious leaders; settlements in cities helping to stem the tide of crime, poverty, illiteracy and corruption; leaders of co-operatives sent where co-operation was only a dream before; hospitals built where, in vast areas, disease had always meant death. How can anyone describe it? What the world church

is doing is too tremendous to comprehend. The extent and significance of its work stagger the senses. And its role in world history has only just begun.

When young men and women hear about that, how it will lift their understanding of the Christian church and its function! No longer will petty theological differences, local denominational competition, too-formalized ritual, or the failures of a particular church be the salient facts about Christianity. Here is something so much bigger and demanding—not the dry records of past glories, but the thrill of present endeavors.

To young men and women who thought graduation from the church came with adulthood, who thought they were not needed, who were deeply concerned about social conditions of their land and wanted to do something but thought that the church would limit their social usefulness, who felt keenly the limitations of churches they had known—here is a part of the Truth that needs to be told. Here is a part of the Christian witness all men should hear: that the ecumenical church is now at work in tasks of service around the world and it is those tasks, above all else, that commend her to the rising generation.

From the darkened hills of our time we can look across the horizons of the world and see the light that can never be put out. Toward that light moves the

ever-growing company of the young, the able, the talented—of every race and color—from a thousand thousand homes, who as the church of Christ live in profound confidence that “God doth undertake to guide the future as he hath the past.”













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